

SECRET/SENSITIVE

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6 October 1975

ACTION PLAN

A. ASSESSMENT (THE PROBLEM):

Basic

1. CIA is caught in the middle of a classic tug of war between Executive and Legislative Branches.
 - a. Legislative is on the offensive.
 - b. ^{Intel Com} CIA is on the defensive.
2. Principal news media inclined to support of the Legislative Branch rather than Executive.
 - a. The offensive is newsier.
3. Certain figures in Congress see political advantage in maximizing past abuses and real or imagined deficiencies, despite possible cost to national foreign intelligence establishment.
 - a. They are not the majority but they're the most visible.
4. The offensive in Congress (and the press) takes two forms.
 - a. Past abuses, illegalities, etc., and the need to protect against recurrence (so far, the Church Committee stresses this).
 - b. Attacks on the competence and effectiveness of CIA (the Pike Committee's concern with alleged failures).
5. The distinction (or confusion) between intelligence as information, evaluation, and analysis and intelligence as covert activities is a feature of the problem and likely to get more so.
6. Greatest dangers to the Agency during this period are:
 - a. Compromise of sensitive intelligence, sources and methods.
 - b. Weakening of effectiveness as regards current and future intelligence responsibilities because of preoccupation by senior management with Congress and the press.
 - c. Lowered morale in Agency, potential recruitment problems, etc.

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d. Development of overly proscriptive and/or unsound legislation under which the Agency will have to operate in the future.

e. Loss of confidence on part of friendly foreign intelligence services and of Americans -- private or official -- whose cooperation is essential.

(INEVITABLE)

Working Assumptions

~~STRENGTHENED~~ DCI of same sort

1. Oversight and accountability functions within the Executive and Legislative Branches will be strengthened.

2. Covert action mission -- while probably reduced from past levels -- will continue. (Mandates) Same distinction between Current Action and Current Intelligence Collection.

3. A central intelligence organization in some form can and will be preserved.

a. The task is to emerge with a workable institution without doing irreparable damage in the process.

Current Situation



(To be covered daily)

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Projection



(To be covered periodically)

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→ B. Objectives

Lehman

(Being developed)

C. Elements of Strategy

(To be developed further)

1. Target Determines Aim

a. Who or what is our target?

(1) Ultimately, it is a majority of the Congress who will initiate legislation or pass on the President's proposals.

(2) In an intermediate sense, it is a few public figures and groups who can/will be listened to by Congress. Two select committees.

b. We need additional active support

(1) The critical elements represented by the moderate center and the reasonable left or liberals within both parties

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has not been enlisted. The key lies in galvanizing support we don't have now.

(2) The people who still believe the US needs the best possible intelligence information and analysis, free of policy bias and budgetary pressures, and who also concede the occasional usefulness of a covert capability.

(3) We've got the conservative patriots, and preaching too often to them merely polarizes opinion, alienates those we haven't got and must get.

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2. Six Propositions Relevant to Strategy

a. Our Future Lies in the Future

(1) Culling over the past will soon pall on everybody, including the media.

(2) We must deal with flurries but not let them distract us from essentials.

b. A Discriminating Strategy

(1) To preserve what is vital or merely important will almost certainly require sacrificing some that is marginal or merely convenient. Pawns and even rooks sometimes have to go in order to save or capture queens. Failure to realize this can lose the game.

(2) Efforts spent in defending things clearly repugnant to most people in Congress (either because they were questionable to begin with or because times have changed) do not merely divert from defending what is really important; they weaken or cancel out such defense.

c. A Flexible Strategy -- Different Strokes for Different Folks

(1) Defense of the Agency or of intelligence in general does not have to be monolithic in theme or 100 percent consistent in emphasis.

(2) Intelligence must perform lots of different services for lots of different people. Whether in strictly professional terms or in quasi-political terms, varying arguments and appeals are possible/permissible -- especially in the quiet, non-media arenas.

d. Some Teeth in the Defense

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(1) Masochism invites sadism in public affairs as in people. Effective defensive strategy will have to involve some aggressive tactics. Instead of replying to attacks only by promises to do better against some abstract and ideal standard, we will have to stress some real-world issues. Examples:

-- What are the alternatives to the CIA? Do its critics want to rely on State or the military exclusively for objective analysis and reporting?

-- How much of a morale and confidence-battering do its critics think the Agency/Community can take before irretrievable damage is done? (I.e., good people get out, mediocrities hang on, young talent stays away in droves, liaison services clam up, preoccupation with investigations of past prevents effective attention to present, etc.).

-- These arguments must be used adroitly, but they are telling arguments in some circles. The choice is not between a perfect operation and the status quo ante, but between the best possible and nothing.

e. Let Others Carry the Ball When Possible

→ (1) In some quarters anyone from the Agency is suspect, and an ounce of support from neutral sources is worth many pounds of special pleading from CIA officials, however well done or persuasive to the initiated. We may have to supply the balls, but we are not always the best backs.

f. Level With Our Critics -- Within Reason

(1) In discussing present and future intelligence needs and activities, a long-term strategy must accept the need for being forthcoming with our critics.

-- This will be alien to many long-held practices and beliefs.

-- What must be protected can be only if Congress cooperates.

-- And Congress will cooperate only if the Agency shows willingness to share its non-vital secrets.

-- When calmer times come, most Congressional critics will appreciate that they don't want to share fully in all intelligence secrets -- and thereby accept unwelcome responsibilities.

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3. A Caveat

a. The strategy implied above will run contrary to some views that the best defense is to hunker down, yield only what must be yielded and that only after a fight, rely on cosmetics, keep in mind the transitory nature of publicity, and tough it out.

b. This argument would be more persuasive if we were dealing only with the press and something vague called public opinion. We're not. As suggested at the outset, we're dealing primarily with Congress -- which is highly, if not always accurately, informed, which feels passionately about its own powers and obligations to do something, and which will be writing or approving the laws we will have to work under in the future.

D. Specific Measures/Task Assignments

(McMahon)

E. Contingency Planning/Bombshells)

"What if ?"



et al)

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